

III. REMARKS

Claims 1-9 remain pending in this application. By this amendment, claims 1 and 4 have been amended. Applicants do not acquiesce in the correctness of the rejections and reserve the right to present specific arguments regarding any rejected claims not specifically addressed. Further, Applicants reserve the right to pursue the full scope of the subject matter of the original claims in a subsequent patent application that claims priority to the instant application. Reconsideration in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claims 1-3 and 5-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by Gune (U.S. Patent Pub. No. 2003/0204427), hereafter “Gune”, incorporating by reference (U.S. Patent Pub. No. 2003/0189600), hereafter “Gune 600”. Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Gune, incorporating by reference Gune 600 in view of Applicants’ alleged admissions.

A. REJECTION OF CLAIMS 1-3 AND 5-9 UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

With regard to the 35 U.S.C. §102(e) rejection over Gune, Applicants assert that Gune does not disclose each and every feature of the claimed invention. For example, with respect to claim 1, Applicants submit that Gune fails to disclose automatically determining the approver and a subsequent approver from a hierarchy of approvers based on an item in the item request, the any subsequent approver being someone from whom approval must be obtained subsequent to approval being obtained from the approver and automatically forwarding an approval message to the subsequent approver in the approver list after the updating step for a request that has been approved by the approver. In contrast, the passages of Gune cited by the Office, while disclosing redirecting approval requests to a manager only when a user responsible for acting on

an approval request fails to do so in a timely manner. To this extent, the redirecting only occurs if the request is not approved and not when approval is granted.

Furthermore, Gune indicates only that an alternative user is used for this backup redirection, without specifying how this backup user is selected. To this extent, Gune fails to disclose that this alternative user is selected based on the item in the item request for which approval is being requested. In other words, the approver and any subsequent approvers in the claimed invention are selected based on the item for which approval is being requested. For example, a request from a requestor for pencils may be directed to one approver and subsequent approver combination, while a request for cleaning supplies from the same requestor may be directed to a completely different approver and subsequent approver combination. Gune fails to disclose these nuances of the claimed invention. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

With respect to the Office's other arguments regarding dependent claims, Applicants herein incorporate the arguments presented above with respect to the independent claims from which the claims depend. Furthermore, Applicants submit that all dependant claims are allowable based on their own distinct features. Since the cited art does not disclose each and every feature of the claimed invention, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection.

B. REJECTION OF CLAIM 4 UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

With regard to the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection over Gune in view of Applicants' alleged admissions, Applicants assert that the cited references do not teach or suggest each and every feature of the claimed invention. Applicants herein incorporate the arguments presented above with respect to the independent claim listed above. In addition, Applicants respectfully submit that Gune also fails to teach or suggest automatically communicating, based on receipt of the at least one item request, an approval message to the approver prior to the logging step, wherein the approval message informs the approver of the at least one item request requiring approval. Initially, Applicants deny the Office's assertion that a discussion of off-line notice by electronic message constitutes an admission of an approval message as part of an integrated approval system such as the one in the claimed invention. However, in order to facilitate expedited prosecution, Applicants have amended the claim to clarify that the approval message is sent automatically based on receipt of the item request, something that off-line processes also do not include. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Office withdraw its rejection.

IV. CONCLUSION

In addition to the above arguments, Applicants submit that each of the pending claims is patentable for one or more additional unique features. To this extent, Applicants do not acquiesce to the Office's interpretation of the claimed subject matter or the references used in rejecting the claimed subject matter. Additionally, Applicants do not acquiesce to the Office's combinations and modifications of the various references or the motives cited for such combinations and modifications. These features and the appropriateness of the Office's combinations and modifications have not been separately addressed herein for brevity.

However, Applicants reserve the right to present such arguments in a later response should one be necessary.

In light of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims are in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner require anything further to place the application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

/Hunter E. Webb/

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